

A Log Bay Reverie

Remembering Bruce Winterbottom

By Gary Giberson



Please take a boat ride with me. You and I are heading up the Mullica River. We've passed under the Garden State Parkway bridge, past the osprey nest, around Collins Cove, across Swan Bay and are entering an area known as Log Bay.

It's late in the afternoon on a fall day, and the sky is ablaze in a magenta way. We are amazed at this sight. The water beneath us takes on the appearance of root beer. The sun hangs low in the tall, dark green cedars; the amber reeds, three-square grass and salt hay bend in the path of a westerly breeze. The swamp maples are colored from a palette only our Creator could know.

We slow, kick the motor into neutral and shut it down as if drawn to do so by a spiritual presence. We're adrift in a special spot. There are teal overhead and black duck on the horizon. A bald eagle to our right is soaring a thermal over the warm pines. Can you feel the hair raise at the base of your neck? You should; this is Bruce's spot.

Bruce Winterbottom was born in Egg Harbor in 1929, about five miles from here as the marsh hawk flies. He passed away on Feb. 1, 1994, from coronary problems. Bruce came from a special family — from parents who encouraged their offspring to be creative and to enjoy their surroundings and be themselves. I have never known a family like this, who produced so many great artists. They could all draw, paint, and Bruce sure could create and carve.

Bruce had such a strong tie to this river — its history, its beauty, its fish, its waterfowl. We spoke often of how lucky we were to be brought into this world, so close to it, and how giving it was to those who had taken from it in the past and will take from it in the future.

Bruce would talk about how he created a radio-controlled decoy in 1950 after a tour of duty in the Navy. His knowledge of mechanical things and their ties with artistic things never ceased to amaze me. Bruce had a way of taking a scene from nature and bringing it alive in a three-dimensional way, in miniature.

What a privilege it was to be invited to hunt or fish with him. You knew each trip would be full of success, whether the stripers would hit a plug or the duck blind would be buzzed by waterfowl.

There is so much to remember about this special friend who has taken his last trip to this special place . . . A crow caws nervously in the distance, breaking the serenity of thoughts. We start the engine and meander up river, knowing each time we revisit Log Bay, Bruce will always be there. Thank you for sharing this trip. May you come here often to drift a spell.

In memory, with love,

Gary Giberson